1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

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751 instructions. While dishes were washed between servings, the water was not boiling nor was it changed.

751 Nevertheless some instances of preventative medicine can be given. Most men are cautious in having sexual intercourse with suspected carriers of venereal disease; the condom as well as urination following coitus are recognized as safeguards against acquiring genital infections. Parents were several times observed to call their youngsters away from one or two children who carried impetigo scars, in one case a seven year old victim of this disease being told: "Go away, you're diseased." In the spring of 1945, following the dysentery outbreak of the previous fall and winter, Old Man burnt the toilet brush near his settlement. He explained that the area had been used by people suffering from the illness. Old Man also dug a new latrine. Following death, old clothes, particularly those which were in contact with a sick person, are abandoned in the brush or burnt. A number of years ago, during a serious flu epidemic in Lower Post, a group of Espato·tena is said to have fled from the town in order to avoid the sickness.

744 Quarantine control of contagious disease was introduced to the community at Lower Post on July 28, 1945, when the death of a boy from spinal meningitis led the Mounted Police and the provincial policeman to post the western reserve. The quarantine was far from complete, however, consisting of little more than a prominently lettered sign being placed at each of the two main entrances to the area. In addition the missionary sought to segregate the school children from this reserve, while adults were advised to limit their shopping trips into town to once a day. The lax enforcement of the quarantine resulted in its consistent violation by everyone except the parents of the boy who had died (not, however, by his next younger brother). People continued to leave the area frequently, ate in the restaurant and at the lunch counter, and attended church. Few people from other quarters of the community avoided visiting friends or dances in the restricted reserve and two potlatches were even celebrated there during the term of the quarantine. Only the white residents of Lower Post were explicitly warned to observe the posting on the occasion of the first potlatch. Several Indians, including the family of the deceased, expressed annoyance at the theoretical infringement of their freedom introduced by the quarantine, and several times adolescent boys tore up the signs and tossed them into brush where they were retrieved by the provincial policeman and remounted. The quarantine was officially in effect for over a month.

752 It has already been stated that the Kaska are not an accident prone people. Nevertheless accidents do occur and are generally attributed to carelessness, drunkenness, or "bad luck." Associated with the relative infrequency of accidents is the fact that most people manifest a realistic, though not exaggerated, concern with safety. In case of necessity, however, considerations of safety are readily sacrificed to expediency combined with caution. A person will travel during a snowstorm or in very low temperatures if the journey is important or has once begun. Parents do not worry unduly about household dangers. Sharp tools, scissors, axes, and knives are often left lying around the camp where children are free to handle them. Nobody was observed to take foolhardy chances, however, and when any real threats of danger are pointed out, the advice given is generally heeded.

The treatment of accidents is not developed beyond a simple, practical level. Small cuts and bruises are not treated. More serious cuts are bandaged. It is felt that serious wounds

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should be kept warm in order to promote rapid healing; this care is especially important in winter. Nosebleed is often permitted to continue without interference, the victim leaning forward to allow the blood to drop on the ground. Excessive bleeding of this kind may lead to attempts to staunch the flow of blood with a cloth and sometimes the little finger is tied with a string to stop the circulation before it reaches the nose. Balsam pitch, when available, is applied to burns. The treatment of snowblindness consists primarily in avoiding exposure to strong light. In an emergency, broken bones are set by anyone who feels capable of the operation and mobility is later aided with a crutch made of a single pole, shoulder height, on which is nailed a semicircular wooden support for the armpit. One report was obtained about an old man who, paralyzed on one side, was provided with a small "sleigh" with wooden wheels. To this a dog was harnessed and thus the man could move around camp.[16] Frances Lake Indians sometimes treat swellings and pains in the joints with a charcoal cross drawn over the affected spot. Patent medicine linaments are used for muscle aches and their application may be accompanied by some massage of the painful area. Frozen members of the body are thawed with snow, which is gently applied but not rubbed in place. Corns, regarded as the peculiar affliction of men, are cut out at the root with a pocket knife, "Women can't get it," Old man said, referring to corns. "Maybe because they stay in camp, warm place." In recent years any serious bodily injury, including toothache, has been referred to white medical attention when possible.

Kaska society has formulated no clear and explicit theory of disease. As a result several vague but not necessarily conflicting notions of the origin and cause of illness obtain among different individuals. Thus commenting on his cold, Hans suggested that "wind" must have brought the "cold sick" from "down there," gesturing down the Liard River. The notion of communicable diseases being borne in the air or wind is closely allied to the notion of disease transmitted in interpersonal association to which we have already alluded. In referring to the fact that he and his wife had suffered from dysentery during the winter, Billy Barre said that people were "packing" the disease around with them "just like wind."

Some illnesses, especially cold, are believed to result from exposure to wet and cold. Thus Old Man felt he had caught a bad cold during his walk home from Old Kean's place in the autumn rains. Summer days of strong wind and flying dust usually provoke people to comment on the dust as being injurious to health. The dust raised by dancing on a wooden floor also stimulates complaints from people who ascribe sore throats to this irritant. Another point of view ascribes illness to internal disorders, particularly disorders of the stomach and liver. Louis Maza, in relating the story of his first son's death, said the child had been carried on the back of one of the older girls. He suspected that in the packing one of the baby's ribs had somehow been struck with the result that the liver had become damaged. Death followed in a few days.

Less frequently is the origin of a specific disease ascribed to the spirit of a dead person and rarely to sorcery. Informants were consistent in denying belief in "bad medicine."[17] While recognizing that such attitudes had formerly occurred in the society, today, ac-

[16] The wheel is not aboriginal in Kaska culture.

[17] Kaska ideas about sorcery may be divided into two types, first, those surviving from aboriginal times and, second, "witch-fear," which appeared in the post contact society and lasted until about 1925. See Honigmann, Witch-Fear in Post-Contact Kaska Society (1947).

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Frances Lake
Upper Liard
Dease River

pointed out that in illness all the wind did not leave the body—this would have caused death. To cure, a shaman blew some of his wind into the patient's body. No recollection of confession was admitted but Field's anecdote above suggests that practice. Sorcery sometimes resulted in death, or was believed to have that power. The avoidance on making snowshoes before snow lay on the ground obtained among the Frances Lake people as it did in the upper Liard Valley.

MEDICINE AND SURGERY

It appears that, compared to the magical rites discussed above, relatively less dogmatic attitudes governed the methods of therapy to be described in this section. Some of the techniques to be discussed may even have been supported by an awareness of their empirically verifiable relationship to the desired end.

Upper Liard Kaska. Charcoal rubbed under the eyes prevented snow blindness. To cure the affliction the sore eyes were bathed in infusions of alder or tamarack bark. No help for snow blindness came from the application of spruce gum nor was bleeding ever used for this purpose. Spruce gum helped to treat blisters, while the young flowers of the fireweed boiled in water provided a drink that relieved muscular pains. An unidentified white root (negata), with an odor as penetrating as horse-radish, growing in mountainous country cleared up head congestion resulting from colds. After grinding it and mixing it with grease, a sufferer breathed the root through each nostril in turn. Sweat baths afforded protection from colds. Both sexes took such baths regularly from about the age of ten. Men preceded women in the sweat lodge. Bathing in the sulphurous hot springs of the Cassiar possessed no therapeutic value.[42]

Dease River Kaska. People used balsam gum to staunch the flow of blood from a cut and then bound the wound with dry grass. The same substance applied to the inner corners of each eye relieved snow blindness without bandaging. Snow blindness was caused by small "white bugs" springing from the snow into the victim's eyes. Snow also harbored small black insects (ta'uctetla?) that had no injurious effects on human beings.[43] A tourniquet prevented fatal bleeding in case of a severed artery. Animal grease or brains relieved the pain of burns. Broken bones were set by shamans, the limb being stretched and tightly bound with a layer of grass wrapped around with tanned-skin line. The casing remained in place for several months or until the break healed. Snowshoe "sickness," manifested by aching in the toes and insteps, could be relieved overnight by wrapping and binding the feet with grass. To thaw frozen parts of the body people gently rubbed snow on the affected part. Also the frozen organ might be immersed in extremely cold water. Remedies for toothache were denied. Emetics are probable but their nature could not be recalled precisely. To treat colds, urine in a vessel was heated with a hot pole. The patient then crouched over the liquid, his head covered with a skin, and inhaled the fumes. Presumably human urine is indicated.

[42] For some contemporary remedies, a few of which, like the inhalation of urine fumes, probably have roots in the aboriginal period, see Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society* (1949), 247.

[43] "Small black worms" were thought by the Fort Nelson Slave to cause snow blindness. Honigmann, *Ethnography and Acculturation of the Fort Nelson Slave* (1946), 132.